

CHURCH PROFILE FORM

Worship:

How are members involved in planning and participation in the liturgy/worship?

Our worship committee, composed of church members, a council representative and the pastor plans the services, sound, worship leaders and decorations. Liturgy is primarily planned by the pastor. The music choices are made by the worship teams with special consideration to the theme of the pastor's message and any special considerations in the service. The worship team will participate in welcoming the congregation, special readings, leading the children's song and reading scripture. At times, members of the congregation will be asked to participate in services such as Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter and others. Occasionally, special services are held for specific ministries such as Friendship group, Coffee Break, GEMS or other special groups with participation from members of these groups.

Our music is led by several teams of pianists, percussionists, and singers. In particular, we have a few dedicated percussionists and guitar players that enjoy playing nearly every week. This is all supported by teams of projectionists and sound technicians. Our facility enjoys an excellent modern sound system and concert worthy lighting.

Describe the worship services in your church:

Worship services are held once a Sunday at 10:00 am, and on special church calendar dates. On occasion we will host special evening services for specific ministries, prayer, or worship. The services have a regular structure with some allowance for flexibility.

Our worship teams provide a welcoming experience with primarily contemporary and some traditional music choices. Accompanists generally include two or three singers, pianist, percussionist, guitars and on occasion string or other instruments. The services are centred on God's word in music choices, readings, prayer and messages. We communally participate in the Lord's supper about six times per year and invite all members and visiting believers to participate, including children.

We have a nursery for children ages 0-2 and Sunday school for children ages 3-6. Children are welcome in our services and if desired will leave for Sunday school before the congregational prayer and message begins.

Coffee, tea, and juice is served after our services and participants enjoy a large fellowship area, gymnasium, and outdoor area.

Describe the discipleship practices in your church for all ages of members and attenders:

The ministries we were active in before the Covid 19 pandemic are many.

Nursery for children ages 0-2 and Sunday school for ages 3-6 during services. Gift baskets are prepared for new babies in our church and on occasion a special baby or engagement shower are held.

We host GEMS for grades 3 – 7 and Cadets for grades 4 - 7 and youth groups for grades 7-12. Faith formation classes for grades 10-12 have traditionally been led by elders and the pastor.

We have an active Friendship group supported by many outside of our church base. Coffee Break bible studies for women have been hosted Tuesday mornings and evenings with interdenominational leadership and participation.

A men's prayer group meets for breakfast and prayer every two weeks on Saturday mornings and the 55+ group hosts a number of gatherings throughout the year. Currently we have started new neighbourhood care groups and there are several established Bible study groups amongst our members. Our church has hosted some alpha study groups for both adults and youth.

Our facility includes two kitchens and in particular a commercial kitchen attached to our gymnasium that has allowed us to provide a soup kitchen for our wider community. This was held after services on Sundays.

On occasion we have held communal congregational meals and had large church picnics/barbecues.

Narrative:

In what ways does your church participate in ecumenical activities?

Several of our programs involve volunteers and participants from other churches. GEMS, Cadets, Coffee Break, and Friendship groups are supported by several denominations in our community. Our youth group on occasion enjoys group events with the local Evangelical Free youth group as well as Telkwa Community Church.

On occasion, ecumenical worship services have been held around special church dates, and some summer outdoor services. We have a good relationship with our neighbouring Christian Reformed church, Telkwa Community Church, and have at times had combined church services.

Smithers and Telkwa has a local ministerial group that meets regularly. Our previous pastors have been active participants in this group.

We have a close relationship with Bulkley Valley Christian School which has provided a lot of connection between various church community members.

Reflect on your strengths/gifts as a church:

As a typical small-town community, Smithers CRC is welcoming with open doors and a dose of small-town charm not easily found in a large centre.

We have been blessed to build an excellent facility that allows us to host many of our own ministries and offer rental and hosting opportunities to our greater community. When our congregation decided to build this facility (a large renovation of an old Christian school building) our focus and purpose was that it be a useful and welcoming place for our wider community. Our church building has a large sanctuary, gymnasium, library, ample room for fellowship as well as many classrooms, nursery space and spacious offices for administration.

Gratefully we have had healthy finances which have allowed for the building and maintenance of this facility and the ministries hosted in it. There is a strong desire among our church members to expand and deepen our current ministries and an openness to change or start new ministries.

Our many ministries have been well supported by a willing base of volunteers that have generously given of their time and gifts. When we have hosted large events in our church, for our own congregation or wider community events it has not been difficult to find willing and joyful volunteers.

Reflect on your passions as a church:

We have a desire to be a welcoming church and seek to meet the challenge of being able to do that well. A new visitor to our church would have a difficult time leaving a Sunday service without a warm greeting and a few inviting questions. We seek to include all people that enter our doors and hope to provide a sense of belonging to all who attend.

As a church community we have wrestled with various issues such as new building projects, and women in office. At times these issues have caused some discomfort in our church, but we have always attempted to do this in such a way that church unity was always considered a priority. Our strong emphasis on unity has at times made decision making slow. The unity we experience as a body of believers over speedy progress has traditionally been of utmost value to this congregation.

As we navigated the Covid pandemic, there have been bumps and differences of opinion along the way, however there is general consensus that council has provided our church with good leadership navigating the provincial health orders and mandates. Gratefully, we have not experienced significant conflict or division about this matter.

Our congregation has a passion to enjoy fellowship within our congregation and in the broader community. Experiencing fellowship across demographics in our time together after church, in our various ministries and large church gatherings is valuable to our church body.

All our activities, in ministries we run, church services, and community involvement are a reflection of our commitment to being a Bible believing church. Our actions are based on scripture and the Holy Spirit's leading and guiding us to wisdom and action.

Over the years our congregation has been passionate about providing new opportunities for refugees in our community. Our refugee committee has been ongoing and active for the last 30 years. We have been blessed to welcome and support new families from difficult circumstances into our community. We are in the process of bringing another family into our community and pray for progress to be made so this new family can join us here.

List specific problems with which your congregation struggles:

As most congregations in Canada, we have experienced a great change over the past two years with many disruptions to our ways of engaging together and experiencing community during the Covid 19 pandemic. We are in an exciting but challenging period of time as we restart our past ministries and re-imagine how we will move forward in an ever-changing time. This is an opportunity to evaluate how we have run ministries and the challenge lies with how to move forward in meaningful and intentional ways together.

While our congregation has a committed volunteer base and regular church attenders, we struggle with the discipleship that encourages attenders to seek formal membership.

Discipleship in some areas is lacking as there are ministry gaps for some age groups in our congregation. There is a desire among members to deepen our current ministries in all areas.

To address this issue, we need more leadership growth and mentorship among our younger members and attenders to improve the variation of our volunteer base. Many of the same people are doing a

lot of the work of our church. While this group is committed and joyful in their work, there could be a greater number and variety of willing volunteers. We could improve in equipping and involving our members in discipleship and encouraging them in using their gifts.

While our facility has been used well for our own ministries and many wider community events, our church has a desire to connect more in meaningful ways with our wider community. We are a historically Dutch/European church community and have expanded our cultural representation greatly over the years, but we could find ways to open our doors wider.

We have a desire to connect with our local indigenous community in meaningful ways; working towards reconciliation and therefore, meaningful ministry with our indigenous neighbours is an area in which we could grow.

While we have become more diverse over the years, and are known for being a welcoming place, we could become more enfolding of new visitors.

What has been the most interesting and challenging event in the life of your church in the last three years?

Experiencing the separation with our pastor was a challenge which coincided with the pandemic interfering with our regular activities. For 18 months the congregation functioned without a lead pastor while dealing with Covid. We are grateful that throughout this time leadership worked together well and was able to provide worship and a feeling of unity that kept the congregation together.

List major goals that this congregation has set for itself or opportunities the congregation anticipates:

A goal of particular importance to our congregation is a continued sense of community and unity. We value this sense of unity and pray that we can maintain it through difficult times in reliance on God's work in His spirit.

We have a desire for deep spiritual growth in following Christ through strengthening each other in faith formation through all ages. We want to first build each other up through this spiritual growth and work towards serving each other's needs and the needs of our greater community.

We hope to strengthen, grow and diversify our volunteer base and lay leadership in the church. We have a desire to support one another in encouraging and developing gifts in current and potential volunteers for service.

In the past our church council has worked on a thoughtful strategic plan that has helped us to grow together in meaningful ways. We would like to be committed to continual strategic planning and pick up on work done prior to the disruptions that the global pandemic has caused.

Describe what being Christians of Reformed accent means to you:

Being Christians of a Reformed accent, we believe we are called to constantly evaluate and consider how we live our lives in service to God. We are not only reformed but are constantly reforming our world and life view so as to be constantly walking in God's will.

We acknowledge that every square inch of creation belongs to God, is under His dominion and that all of our lives are an expression of our worship to God.

Describe your understanding of the relationship between the local church and the Christian Reformed denomination:

The denomination is a support to the local church by providing resources such as published materials, safe church protocols, educational facilities like Calvin Seminary from which we as a local church can benefit.

The Christian Reformed denomination provides an opportunity for many congregations to participate in a larger community in which we can discern God's will. We are then able to help each other to walk in His ways as we navigate issues and struggles that we must confront together.

The denomination carries out worldwide ministries that we as the local church can participate in but are not able to carry out on our own. Examples include, World Renew, Reframe ministry, University and Seafarers chaplaincies. We are grateful to be able to support these ministries and are committed to the Christian Reformed denomination's many opportunities for service in the world.

Identify some of the cultural challenges facing Christians and Christian Churches today:

Our world is ever changing and growing but this presents us with particular challenges in the church which affect us in real and tangible ways. Our membership, participation and unity as well as the way we educate and disciple our congregation is affected greatly by a number of cultural challenges.

An increased sense of individualism, consumerism and affluence has certainly affected the way we think and function in the ways we commit to one another and our wider community.

Changing attitudes on sexuality in relationships, homosexuality and gender identity in popular culture have a significant effect on how we see the world and our neighbours. These issues are important to think about and challenges for us as a community to discuss in an open and disciplined way. Our church has yet to discuss Synod's report on sexuality and needs to address this in a thoughtful, open and loving way.

Our culture has a changed perception of Christian churches as relates to all issues in our culture as our society trends towards secularism.

Technology has changed immensely and with that an enormous amount of information is now available to everyone. While this gives us much more opportunity to gain knowledge and understanding, good discernment is more important than ever. This has contributed to challenges in some understanding the relevance of organised religion, many differing opinions about Biblical interpretation and translation although that has forever been a struggle, and of particular concern a negative view by many of the role of church in society. Media and technology have considerable influence on many of the issues we struggle with, and many rely on media and internet wisdom instead of the thoughtful discernment of the church.

What have been the three most important events in the history of your church?

Early in our church history we were able to be a big part of helping to build the Bulkley Valley Christian School. This school has changed much over the years but began as a theologically Reformed based school. It now provides Christian education to families from many denominations and backgrounds.

We are proud to have been part of the beginning of that community and have a special relationship with BVCS today.

A difficult time in our church history was the church split 25+ years ago, as a result of the denomination's decision to affirm women in ecclesiastical office. This was a painful time when many families and close friendships were affected and though there has been much healing, this event still affects our community today.

A significant event in the life of our church body was the building of a new multi-purpose facility for worship, ministry, and community events. We had been housed in an older building and had outgrown the facilities. This process was discussed at length and required the consultation and consensus of our membership over many years. Finally, the right opportunity came to us and we were able to move forward relatively quickly. This was an important time to grow together as we met in the local Catholic church for a time, forging new relationships with that community as well as a better understanding of who we are as a church outside of a building. Building the new facility together with the help of a local contractor and their crew was a time of great co-operation and excitement.

As mentioned earlier in our profile, one of our passions is being purposeful in sponsoring refugee families. The families that we have been able to support have always been the richest blessing to our church family and given us much more than we could ever provide them. God has given us the desire and ability to sponsor families which we are grateful for and hope to continue for many years to come.